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OPINION: The green tights aren't the only things that are repugnant about this hero's makeover.

KEEP's "Robin Hood in reverse" plan

When I was young, I read a lot of stories. One of them was about Robin Hood, who stole from the rich and gave to the poor. I know you're not supposed to steal even from a rich person, but you had to like the guy. The green tights were a little much, and his methods left something to be desired, but he meant well.

Robin Hood had a good image, one he didn't have to spend a lot of advertising money to create. He was on the right side, and everyone knew it. I imagine, however, that Robin Hood would have been a whole lot less popular if, rather than stealing from the rich and giving to the poor, he had stolen from the poor and given to the rich. If that had been the case, he would definitely have had to hire expensive media consultants and take out pricey newspaper and television ads putting a good spin on his exploits.

That is the situation in which proponents of expanded gambling in Kentucky find themselves. An organization calling itself KEEP (Kentucky Equine Education Project) is trying once again to convince Kentuckians that the horse industry is in trouble, and needs what amounts to a financial bail out by allowing casinos at horse tracks.

Does the horse industry really need to be bailed out? If you're ever tempted to think so, just ask yourself these questions: If the horse industry is hurting, why war Churchill Downs has been described in a Lexington Herald-Leader article as "the most successful racing company in the United States?"

If the horse industry is hurting, then how do you explain that the 2005 and 2007 Breeding Stock Sale grossed an all-time high of \$313 million and its 2006 September Yearling Sale grossed \$399 million—the largest sales event in history worldwide. These are not exactly indications of severe poverty.

KEEP's casino plan is also bad public policy because the implications are not equitable for all Kentuckians. Who will suffer the most when it comes to losing money at the slot machines they're planning to pollute the state with? Well, we know who buys lottery tickets. Anyone who makes the mistake of not paying for their gas at the pump has waived in line behind people

Oh, and I mentioned their recent \$5 million ad campaign or the tens of thousands of dollars they have spent trying to curry favor with legislators? Let's face it. When you think about poverty in Kentucky, the horse industry is not usually the first thing that comes to mind.

The horse industry is not in trouble. On the contrary, its remarkable success is something of which, as Kentuckians, we can all be proud. KEEP officials need to be ashamed of which, as Kentuckians, we can all be proud. KEEP officials need to be something of which, as Kentuckians, we can all be proud.



Martin Cotran is senior policy analyst for The Family Foundation

buying their lottery tickets. More often than not, they are those who can least afford to throw away their money. The Lottery has built its success on the backs of people who really can't afford it. They need to be told that it's not only deceptive, but unbecomingly for a reputable industry to act this way. KEEP's casino plan is also bad public policy because the implications are not equitable for all Kentuckians. Who will suffer the most when it comes to losing money at the slot machines they're planning to pollute the state with? Well, we know who buys lottery tickets. Anyone who makes the mistake of not paying for their gas at the pump has waived in line behind people



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OPINION: The misappropriation of time and energy for casinos is a waste of the state's social and economic capital.

Imagine the whole boat rising

Imagine for a moment if all the time and energy spent in recent years deciding whether to expand gambling in Kentucky had been invested instead in developing sustainable economic strategies for the Commonwealth. This misappropriation of time, this poor investment of social and intellectual capital, might have alternatively been devoted to improving our public education system, developing our workforce, comprehensively reforming our antiquated tax system, or restoring discipline to our outlandish "re-election spending."

Here we are though, and the issue is highly important for all Kentuckians, gamblers and non-gamblers alike. The scholarly data is conclusive when it comes to proximity to gambling: the more venues, the more addicted gamblers. And more addicted gamblers mean higher taxes for non-gamblers as other businesses lose revenue, families go bankrupt, crime increases, and public assistance programs grow.

Our Commonwealth will only be as well off as the least among us—the very same demographic group most attracted to the seductive false hope of casinos. When their conditions worsen, the more fortunate

of us pick up the tab. As their conditions improve, our whole boat rises. Rather than invest in improving our collective economic condition, some suggest allowing a business that can only worsen the conditions of economically disadvantaged Kentuckians.

Promoters of the CasinoAct agenda are a narrow special interest comprised of prospective casino owners, others who stand to financially benefit, and pro-casino politicians addicted to developing new sources of campaign contributions. These same politicians enjoy governmental spending, whether it's necessary or not. They have ribbon cuttings on overpriced luxuries, while our schools become more crowded, our bridges crack, and our roads devolve. They suffer from a courage deficit when it comes to increasing spending discipline and catalyzing fundamental change in taxation.

The only other supporters are the "gamers," those who consider losing money and getting nothing in return to be entertainment. And today they have more opportunities to do that than at any point in history.

Direct democratic activity like a referendum on casinos requires an educated populace for the common welfare to be served. Casino promoters are familiar with our electorate, and they know many people will vote with false hope for the big windfall, when in fact they are considering a new tax. Our Constitution requires our elected officials to convince the electorate



John-Mark Hack is chairman of Say No To Casinos

of the need for new taxes. It prohibits them from sidestepping this fundamental obligation by levying shadow taxes like casinos. And casinos are indeed a new tax in Kentucky. Kentuckians put money in, while casinos and government take money out.

Instead of devoting so much energy to repeating the mistakes of our past and expending different results, imagine what we could accomplish by developing new opportunities for constructive and empowering economic activity, restorative and sustainable development, progress and promotion, growth and giving. Imagine the whole boat rising.

John-Mark Hack

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